



Organic Food Program (OFP) Survey Results 2004

Purpose

The WSDA Organic Food Program strategic plan states that a Customer Survey will be conducted every three years. The purpose of the survey is to gather information that can be used to determine the efficacy of already implemented Organic Food Program services and to obtain feedback regarding the future plans/goals of the Organic Food Program.

Methods

In order to obtain accurate, unbiased feedback from our constituents, the WSDA Organic Food Program determined that it would be best *not* to have program staff conduct the survey. Rather, the Organic Food Program asked the fourteen members of the Organic Advisory Board (OAB) to conduct the surveys. One hundred fifty (150) producers, processors, and handlers were randomly selected for this project to be interviewed. A random numbers table was utilized. Each Organic Advisory Board member was provided with a list of nine producers, processors, and handlers and their corresponding contact information. If a member was unable to contact a given producer, processor, or handler, additional names had been selected and were given to the OAB member at their request. As of April 18, 2004, a total of seventy-nine (79) [of the one hundred twenty-six (126)] completed Customer Surveys had been returned. This summary and corresponding data describe the results from these surveys.

Findings

Areas of Excellence

Section A. Office Information

Each area evaluated pertaining to the applicability and usefulness of the documentation provided to applicants in their renewal application packets scored at least a 1.5 (between Always/Almost Always and Usually). Applicant responses indicated that correspondence from the Olympia office was timely and clear.

Section B. Inspections

The quality and thoroughness of Organic Food inspections were given a rating of 1 (Always/Almost Always). Applicants appeared to be satisfied with the quality of the inspections and about the knowledgeability of the inspectors. Responses indicated that the reports were objected and accurately described the findings of the inspection.

Section C. International Certification Program-EOVP/JAS

The export programs implemented by the Organic Food Program appear to be seen as useful to the Organic Food Program constituents. The interviewed applicants indicated that they appreciated that the Organic Food Program offered these services to certified entities.

Section D. General

Overall, applicants appeared satisfied with the quality, efficiency, and relevance of the services offered them through the Organic Food Program. Responses indicated that adequate training opportunities were provided and that the value they received by being certified was worth the costs of organic certification.

The interviewed applicants indicated that the Organic Food Program adequately addressed the needs unique to small farmers.

Areas of Improvement

Section B. Inspections

Applicants indicated both that it would be easy to cheat on organic inspections and that it was not difficult to pass the organic inspection.

Future Developments

Section A. Office Information

The Organic Food Program has been working toward moving all correspondence between the office and the applicants in the program to an electronic format. Feedback from the interviewed parties indicated that certified businesses were hesitant for this shift to occur. When asked whether they wanted correspondence from the office to be sent electronically, the average response from the applicant was 2.5 (between Usually and Seldom.)

Section B. Inspections

Feedback from the interviewed parties here, too, indicated that certified businesses were hesitant for the shift to electronic reporting to occur. When asked if they wanted a computerized on-site inspection, the average response from the applicant was 2.5 (between Usually and Seldom).

Section D. General

Feedback from the interviewed parties here, too, indicated that certified businesses were hesitant for the majority of correspondence between the Organic Food Program and the applicants to be electronic. The average response to this question from the applicant was 2 (Usually).

Conclusions

1. The Organic Food Program office efficiently and effectively responds to the needs of certified businesses. (A1, A3, A4, A6, A7)
2. The Organic Food Program should work toward more comprehensive inspections and reporting to account for the perception that it would be easy to cheat organic standards and that the organic inspections are not hard to pass. (B2, B3)
3. Since questions related to migrating to electronic reporting and communication between the office and the applicants generated responses that indicated our constituents did not want this, the Organic Food Program should reevaluate this program goal. (A5, B9, D2)
4. The implementation of the European Organic Verification Program and other export services are appreciated services and the Organic Program should continue to evaluate methods for maintaining and encouraging the international trade of Washington certified organic products. (C1, C2)
5. The Organic Food Program is offering a useful service to Washington State agriculture. (D1, D3b, D4)
6. The Organic Food Program effectively meets the needs of both small and large certified organic businesses. (C1, C2, D3)

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